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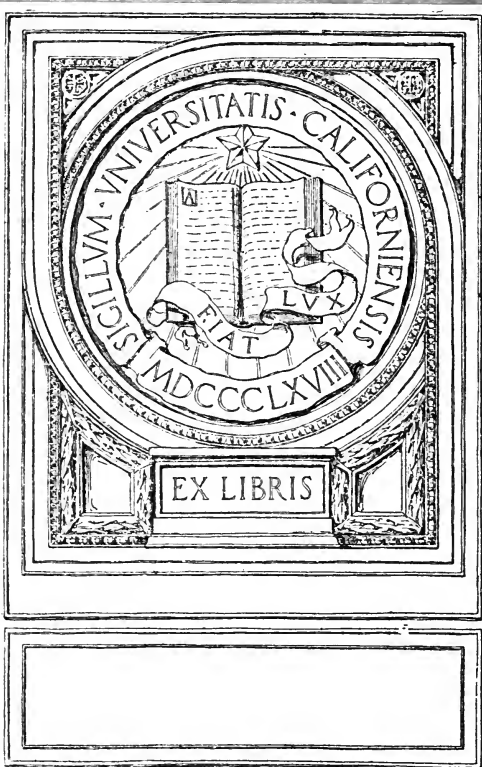
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The Place of
The Voluntary Worker
IN
Civic Life and Social Work

By J. H. HEIGHTON,

Hon. M.A. (Oxon.).

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PREFACE.

THE pages following contain the substance of a lecture delivered at Oxford during the Summer Meeting arranged by the University Extension Delegacy in 1917. It was one of a course of ten lectures on "Educational and Social Reconstruction." Though intended primarily for an audience of students, the lecture dealt with a subject which has lately become of increasing importance to the nation as a whole, and therefore may be of further service in printed form. The case for the voluntary worker is discussed impartially, and reasoned proposals are put forward for increasing the efficiency and possibly extending the sphere of that form of social effort. The author hopes that what he has written will encourage all those who, through the various organisations already established, are giving themselves in the service of their fellows; but he also desires to enlist the sympathy of many who have hitherto held aloof from all forms of voluntary social work. This aloofness on the part of some people may have arisen from lack of knowledge of what was being attempted, thus making them sceptical, or distrustful, of the aims of the work, or of the methods employed. If the following pages help in any way to remove this impression and thereby call up greater forces to meet the new and increased needs of the community, the writer will be more than satisfied.

SUMMARY.

The War as an incentive to voluntary work—A growing movement before the War—The development of voluntary work partly due to an increased feeling of individual responsibility and partly to increased demands and opportunities arising out of national or local needs—Advantages and drawbacks of voluntary work—The relation of the voluntary worker to (1) National and (2) Local Government—Methods of making the voluntary worker efficient—To what extent, in normal circumstances, can the voluntary worker be trained?—Degrees of training defined—The increasing importance of training now and in the future—Its economic aspect—The place of the fully-trained voluntary worker—The sphere of the untrained or partly-trained worker—The difference between being “on a committee” and working—Some of the openings for the various types of voluntary workers—A national survey and national co-ordination—The possibility of organising voluntary work throughout the country—Danger of too much organisation—Should the ideal for every member of the State be to have two occupations, viz., (1) professional or paid work and (2) voluntary or unpaid?—The extent to which this is the case at present—Influence of education and educational ideals—The place of social work and voluntary effort in the State.

THE PLACE OF THE VOLUNTARY WORKER IN CIVIC LIFE AND SOCIAL WORK.

VOLUNTARY work is so interwoven into the organisation of Society that it is difficult to realise its magnitude, and still more difficult to imagine the community without it. In every function of the State the voluntary worker makes his appearance. Even in that highest development of organisation which we call Government, from its central power—where the Paymaster-General, of all people, is unpaid—to the smallest detail of local administration, the “volunteer” does his work. Moreover, we accept it all as the most natural thing in public life. We never question it. It is so much a part of our conception of the management and conduct of affairs that we take it for granted. Whenever anything so vast and so important is taken for granted in public life, we may be sure that it is an element in the vital growth of the nation—that it belongs, as we say, to the genius of the people ; and this aptitude for voluntary work undoubtedly forms part of the character and power of the British race. It develops on a free soil, amongst free institutions, the world over, but it seems to me there is something peculiarly characteristic of the British race and of those nations which, at least in part, have derived from us, in this aptitude for, and success

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in, voluntary work. Other nations may attain their ends in other ways, and most worthily and successfully attain them, but this nation and race will best achieve its purpose and work out its destiny by allowing for the free play of voluntary effort.

The Stimulus of the War.

The War came upon us with great suddenness, but it was hardly declared before we saw a great uprising on all sides of voluntary activity. It is true that that activity was not invariably wise in its objects, and some energy and money were wasted, but in the main it has been a wonderful development. It quickly seized the positions where it was most needed, and on nearly every side has achieved a remarkable success. We do not know what may be the ultimate verdict upon particular portions of the work, nor to what extent it may be thought desirable for the State to take over some of this activity and make it part of the permanent and official work of Government, but there has been very little well-founded criticism or fault-finding in connection with the great voluntary War organisations. One has only to mention the work of the Y.M.C.A., the various Red Cross Units, the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association, the Local Representative Committees, the War Savings Associations, and many others, to recognise this. Never in the history of the nation, and probably in the history of the world, has there been such an enormous manifestation of voluntary devotion to social service.

I suppose my experience is mostly amongst a class of people who would be likely to volunteer

readily for such work, but it is difficult to find a household without its voluntary worker, and, certainly, persons following their ordinary avocations who are not engaged in some form of voluntary work, seem to think it necessary to explain their absence from such activity. Now what does this mean? It means that to be engaged in some voluntary work has become an ideal with a very large section of the community. This almost universal attitude is a new feature, both in its breadth and in its intensity. The question is asked, "Will it remain after the War?" My own impression is that, to a large extent, it has come to stay. Men and women who have found how great the needs of the world are and have found a new interest in life in ministering to those needs, will not readily relapse into that state of existence which finds its zest in, and is wholly satisfied with, the pre-occupation of business or the excitement of sport. Be that as it may, the War has proved a great incentive to voluntary work.

Voluntary Effort before the War.

But it is advisable to guard against the supposition that the growth of such activities is entirely due to the War. Long before the War there was a steadily increasing number of men and women who were giving their time and abilities to forward the public welfare, and this was particularly noticeable in social work. The rise of the Guild of Help movement, for instance, is evidence of this. In every town where a guild was started a ready response was given to the appeal for helpers (even if some of them fell away afterwards), and

hundreds and hundreds of people undertook some form of social work whose previous efforts in that direction did not extend much beyond giving a penny to a beggar. The need for workers grew and grew, and whatever society or public body made the appeal, some response was forthcoming. There were not enough workers to go round, but the number was a steadily increasing one. There was an awakening of what has been called the "social conscience," and when a good case was made out, larger and larger numbers came forward with their offer of personal service. Therefore, this vivifying of voluntary effort was not entirely due to the War—it was a marked feature before August, 1914—but what one hopes is that the War will give a tremendous impetus to what was there before. Whether the effect of the War will be so great as to draw out workers to supply all needs or only enough to cope with special after-war conditions, remains to be seen, but we shall never again find ourselves crying unheeded in a crowd of indifferent people, for this impulse to voluntary effort is not entirely due to a passing phase.

Voluntary work is natural to us as a race—it suits our "make-up"; for many years we have been feeling an increasing individual responsibility—a conscience towards others which stirred within us; and, lastly, the demands arising nationally and locally are more and more insistent. If this nation has a great purpose in the world in the years to come, an important place to fill in the comity of nations—and he is hardly an Englishman who does not hope for it—then its accomplishment will have to be to a large extent by that free effort which neither seeks for reward nor expects praise, but finds its satisfaction in the deed done.

Characteristics of Voluntary Workers.

The main factor in voluntary work, more than in most other work, is the worker ; and it may help us a little if we inquire into the merits and demerits, qualities and disabilities of voluntary workers as a class. Let us look at the debit side first. The voluntary worker is usually untrained, and rarely gets any training except that which experience gives him. Now whilst experience is a very good teacher if you suffer from your own blunders, it often happens in social work that it is the other fellow who suffers. You administer a drug and find that it is fatal, which is a very successful experiment, but in the meantime the patient is dead. In the same way the untrained social worker may pursue a course which ends in failure, and the "case" goes from bad to worse. But does the inexperienced worker gain from that experience? Not he! He blames the "case"; he stalks forth in righteous indignation, or, what is worse, smug self-satisfaction, and proclaims aloud that it is no use trying to help these thriftless poor people. I do not say that training will always eradicate this tendency, but it will lessen the possibility of mistake. Later I propose to consider the question of training, but for the present we must put down want of training as one of the drawbacks.

Sense of Responsibility.

I believe the complaint most frequently made by the permanent official is that the voluntary worker is unreliable. This does not mean that the voluntary worker is untruthful, but that he is

not always there when he is wanted, and that he is not always thorough. I am afraid there is a good deal of truth in this complaint, especially in regard to what is called "case work"* and to the part-time worker. It arises naturally out of the circumstances. The "After-care" Worker, or the Guild Helper, or the friendly visitor of the C.O.S. is given charge of a case and asked to do a particular piece of work, but just at the time some private business or domestic demand arises and the worker puts off, not his own affairs, but those of the "case." Sometimes the worker is very much to blame, sometimes not, but naturally the official is annoyed, and says, "If you want anything done, do it yourself, or have somebody you can 'sack' if they don't do it." This applies more to the part-time worker than to those fortunate people who are able to give the main part of their day to the work in hand. There is another tendency which is too frequent in voluntary work—though I am glad to say there are many workers who resist it—and that is to resign when anything occurs which they do not like, or when their attention is called to mistakes or omissions. I think the War has rather improved this: we stick to our jobs better than we did.

Lack of System.

Lastly we come to a more subtle difficulty. Whenever work is to be carried on permanently and systematically it is necessary to have organisation, and for it to be guided by a body of control,

* By "case work" is meant the work being done, or attempted, in connection with an individual or family requiring help or treatment.

which decides upon policy and method and is responsible in a general way. Usually this controlling body is a committee, and from time to time it enunciates principles, lays down rules, and decides questions at issue. Now, some of those who are working in the organisation do not always agree with the decisions of the committee. It happens quite often that the officers do not—for, strange as it may seem to some committees, even paid officials have views about things—but the honourable official will always loyally carry out the decision of the committee, however much he may disagree with it; whereas sometimes the voluntary worker will exercise what he calls discretion. Evasion of rules, and in some cases flat disregard of the body of control, occasionally mars voluntary work. The official knows that there must be a general policy, that he has no right to upset it, and that one of his first duties is to be loyal to his committee. The voluntary worker must learn this also, and, may I interject, he will be more likely to be loyal if he is a member of the governing body, or is properly represented upon it.

Motive in Voluntary Work.

Turning now to the credit side of the account, it is important to consider the question of motive, because out of it springs most of that which is good and strong in voluntary work. It is possible that with some workers the motive may be a mixed one, but in the great majority of cases there is singleness of purpose, viz., to benefit in some way those who need help, and to give personal service for the well-being of the community. When our

service is given with a desire for power or influence, the practice of some doctrinaire idea, or to serve some end other than that directly undertaken, we are placing the ostensible purpose in a secondary position, which is not fair to the work, but behind the pure motive lies an enormous power which removes obstacles and makes seeming impossibilities the stepping-stones to success. There is no work, whether it be paid or unpaid, so well done as that which is done for love. Let me guard, however, against giving the impression that I think the voluntary worker has a monopoly of the inestimable qualities which arise from this great motive, the desire to give oneself in the service of one's fellows. Many of those who cannot be called voluntary workers share this motive to the full, but in the voluntary worker we have a right to assume—and we shall usually be justified—that this motive is there, and it is out of this that we shall find the finest results develop. Let me here say a word to those who are organisers and directors of voluntary effort, and I say it to myself: always assume the highest motives in the worker; let our work be so planned, and even its details so shaped, as to call forth that which springs from high motives; thus we shall be less frequently disappointed, and we shall obtain the best results. So I say that most of that which is best in voluntary work arises from this motive: without it the volunteer is very likely to be a failure, or his work will be perfunctory, which is ruin to voluntaryism.

Wide Outlook and Initiative.

One of the advantages of the voluntary worker is his freshness and initiative. He is frequently occupied, as the main business of his life, in something quite different from that in which he engages as a volunteer. It is curious how often we find that an organisation which has for its aim some form of social betterment has become narrow—one had almost said pettifogging. It is lamentable to see some committee wrangling about a detail of management, or a question of personal pique, or the spending of a few half-crowns. How often one's soul has been tried and one's time wasted by the almost interminable discussion of some point which a sensible man in his own business would have dismissed in two minutes! Into this narrowness comes a business man who is accustomed to handle large affairs, or a professional man whose mind has dealt with great issues, and the pettiness disappears in the atmosphere of a larger world. We cannot be always changing our officials, and would not if we could, but we can bring new people on to the committee and into the work. The time comes in most organisations when a revolution is necessary: a new start; fresh fuel for the driving power. From the very nature of the case we shall not usually get our revolution from the permanent official. We shall more frequently get it from some mind coming fresh to the problem. In most societies that fresh mind will be that of a voluntary worker. On what is called "case work" I am a strong advocate of voluntary work, and one reason is this freshness of outlook. Some needy family struggling with adversity is swamped, amongst other troubles, in

the sordid pettiness which dogs the lives of the poor. This also is a place where we want the fresh mind coming in, and we are more likely to get it in a voluntary worker than in an official. One does not usually look for freshness of mind in a relieving officer, good officials as some of them are. The official mind becomes too familiarised with the environment; frequent repetition tends to deaden the appeal. Someone has said that the reason prisoners are tried by a jury is partly because the twelve men are not accustomed to the court and will not treat the case as a matter of routine—precisely because to the jury the prisoner is not a “case,” but is a human being. In most of our social work there is a tendency for “case work” to increase; *i.e.*, we are being called upon more and more frequently to deal with cases of distress, or special need, such as the after-care of consumptives, by means of visits to the home of the patient or “case,” and to cope with the whole circumstances arising in the family, not only from the official or legal side and the particular need of the moment, but with a view to permanent and general improvement. In all such work let investigation be made by a trained official if necessary, but then let the case be handed over to a voluntary helper if after-care is needed; and generally it is needed.

It is obvious that, with a good body of voluntary workers, much more work can be accomplished, and at less cost, than if paid officials were solely employed. Much good work is done, especially in small centres of population, which would have to be left undone if it were not for voluntary work, and on the whole it is well and faithfully performed. On the score of initiative there is much that could

be said. I think if we look carefully into the matter we shall find that over and over again great schemes which ultimately have been taken over by the State, or the local authority, have had their inception and have proved their worth in a voluntary organisation. I believe if we are wise we shall always leave a large space for that kind of initiative. A voluntary organisation can make experiments which the State cannot and will not make. The official must be cautious. In his early days he may have been otherwise, and if he were he probably burnt his fingers. The official mind tends to conservatism ; the voluntary mind to enlargement.

Relation of Voluntary Workers to the State.

Having considered what we may expect to find in the voluntary worker by way of advantage and disadvantage, we may now consider his relation, firstly, to national and, secondly, to local government. It is true that the two spheres run into each other, and local administration becomes in regard to internal affairs more and more important. The relation of national to local administration is a most interesting subject, and at the present time requires to be very carefully thought out. As a nation we are continually making experiments in devolution, and progress at present appears to be on the line of exercising the general direction of the State through the channels of financial control. Wherever financial assistance is afforded from the Exchequer, there is a certain amount of central control, and this is a sound principle which on the whole works well. It seems to me that "grants in aid" is a very safe and wise practice. By this

system the organisation and practical carrying out of the work is left to the localities, with a certain amount of freedom. Grants in aid, graduated partly according to needs and partly in proportion to results, seem to have much in their favour. They enable the State to exercise a general control without too much interference with detail. The point for adjustment is, to what extent the central authority should exercise control, and the method of doing this.

Understanding, then, the nature of the problem and the system of state control which tends to prevail, we shall see, from the nature of the case, that the place of the voluntary worker in the national or central body will be very limited, whilst he will have larger opportunities in local administration. The central authority must be to a large extent in the hands of a body of experts—men and women who are specially qualified by training and ability for the work, and give most of their time and their principal energies to it. We cannot get this from the voluntary worker as ordinarily understood. Moreover, there must devolve upon those at the centre a weight of responsibility and a liability to strict accountability which the voluntary worker will not and should not carry. However amateurish in their statesmanship our politicians may be, when they become secretaries of state we pay them a big salary and hold them accountable most strictly, and the principle is thoroughly sound—they have passed out of the natural sphere of voluntary workers. In local administration the executive officers of a corporation are highly trained and fairly well paid experts. They are at the centre. In local administration we have a body of volun-

tary workers who carry considerable responsibility and give a great deal of time, though unpaid, viz., the chairmen of committees. It is a British institution—very British! How long it will last if the amount of work done locally continues to increase at the present rate I do not know. I sometimes think there will be so many committees of a town council that every member of the council will be chairman of at least one committee and will have to give the greater part of his time to the work. However, this is a digression. When we begin to travel out from the centre to the detailed work of the committees we find the opportunity of the volunteer increases, but this is to a large extent a recent development. There used to be a very clear line of demarcation. Except as an elected representative, the opportunities for the voluntary worker were very rare. Having got his particular candidate elected, or defeated, as the case may be, he was severely put in his place outside the pale until the next election. And there was a reason for this. The work undertaken was almost entirely of a nature which could only, or could best, be carried out by experts, whether they were town clerks or navvies, but with the enlargement of the sphere of local administration this has to some extent been altered. The voluntary worker may now be a school manager; he may engage in the “after-care” of consumptives, of the mentally deficient, of the feeble minded; he may advise children who are about to leave or have left school; he may visit “boarded-out” children, engage in infant welfare and the feeding of school children; also he may give in free libraries what are called “talks,” or lectures; and, not least, he may be a special constable. All these activities are part of

the work of local administrative bodies, and I do not profess to have given an exhaustive list. It may be noticed that this work is on the circumference rather than at the centre, and I think I have now made the way clear to lay down a principle, viz., that the scope for voluntary effort will be at the minimum at the centre and the maximum at the circumference of administrative work.

Social and Civic Activity.

A great deal of this scope for voluntary effort in civic work is of recent origin. The reasons for this are as follows :—Much of the work has been, or is, experimental and tentative; ratepayers' representatives were not inclined to embark on new and unfamiliar schemes involving expenditure; the creating of salaried posts and an "army of officials." Thus way was opened for the cheaper method of voluntarism. But this was not all. Much of the detailed work was peculiarly adapted to the special qualifications of the voluntary worker. The after-care of consumptives, for instance, requires tactful persuasion and a certain intimate relationship, as well as patient overcoming of not very tangible difficulties, if it is to be successful. I do not say that an official would not do this, but I think it is better done by a friendly visitor of the right kind, who does not come in an official capacity and order things to be done, but enters into domestic and personal difficulties as a friend of the family. The work of local administration is civic or social, but there are degrees of sociableness—if I may use the word in a special sense. The upkeep of roads and the supply of water are civic functions, and the care of consumptives is a

civic responsibility, but in the latter case there is a more social or intimate element than in the former. In the upkeep of roads there appears to be no scope for the voluntary worker, because on the whole it is better to employ a professional navvy on a cash basis ; but when we are repairing a human being the cash nexus, as Carlyle called it, does not work so well, and even if such cases are dealt with by an official, the more he approximates to a friend in his attitude, the greater the success. If I may, for the moment, use the word *social* to connote a more intimate relationship than the word *civic*, I would say that the activities of the municipality on the social side tend to increase, and in so doing the municipality has the direct encouragement of the national Government. The War, also, has given an impetus in this direction. The establishment of local representative committees, and the association with them of an enormous number of voluntary workers, was a step of great importance, and one which will almost certainly have far-reaching and lasting effects ; and much the same may be said of war pensions and disabled soldiers' committees. The day of the voluntary worker in civic life seems not only to have dawned, but to have become a permanent institution.

Training of Voluntary Workers.

If the sphere of the voluntary worker in local administration is opening out to the extent which I have just indicated—and I think I have not exaggerated it—we may well ask the question : Is the voluntary worker qualified to enter into so large and so important a field ? The amount of

knowledge which is actually essential is not great, provided there is willingness and keenness. The desire to help is the most important factor, but qualification is also important, and the sphere will not increase, as at present it promises to do, if the workers are found not to be equal to the task. Voluntary work is on its trial as it never was before, and its place will have to be determined by the amount of ability which is found to exist. Some officials and committees are very sceptical about voluntary work, and this applies to many purely voluntary societies as well as to statutory bodies. One knows of many philanthropic societies in which all the work, except committee management, is done by paid officers, and voluntary assistance is distinctly discouraged. Wherever this is the case, voluntary work is very likely to be a failure. But even where it is not discouraged we often find that very little effort is made to use it to the best advantage. A voluntary worker, like every other worker, requires instruction in the work which he has to do, and the more important and responsible the work, the more instruction will be required. I am quite sure that much of the failure in voluntary work, where that occurs—and I am not suggesting that it is a frequent occurrence—is due to want of proper initiation, instruction, and oversight in the early stages.

Methods of Training.

Let us take for illustration "case work," which, I am convinced, is one of the most fruitful fields for voluntary effort. It is not enough to give the new visitor a few details about the case, and then

send him off to visit and make a report. He should go more than once with an experienced worker of proved efficiency, and see precisely what takes place. His first few reports should be carefully and tactfully gone into with him by the official, or whoever is responsible for the district, and instead of resenting such oversight, he will generally welcome and appreciate the assistance. This refers to the practical side of the work, but something more is required if intelligent work is to be obtained. It is not enough to tell a worker to do this or to do that; the reasons must be explained to him. The official, whether he be paid or unpaid, must not regard himself as a drill sergeant, but rather as a general of division explaining to his immediate subordinates the plan of campaign. To drop metaphor, there must be a real understanding of the aim and purpose of the work undertaken. In all voluntary work, whether it be connected with statutory bodies or with purely voluntary societies, a place should be found for the two kinds of instruction, the practical and the theoretical. The first will be accomplished, as I have very briefly indicated, by what may be called "field instruction"—actually seeing a piece of work well done; and the second may be attempted in more ways than one. Usually there will be one or more books upon the subject which, in the first flush of enthusiasm, the worker may be induced to read. In this connection let me mention the admirable and concise little handbook recently issued by the Joint Committee on Social Service, which should be placed in the hands of every social worker, especially those doing case work. Another method may be by talks or lectures to groups of workers. The

groups should be not too large, so that there may be questions and answers and a free interchange of views and statement of difficulties ; and these talks should be by persons who are themselves actually engaged in the work, or have had wide experience of such work. Lastly, an attempt should be made to link up practical work with that broader view and deeper knowledge which seeks to discover principles and to understand the great issues of human progress. Our work will never be at its highest if it is solely concerned with the petty affairs of our own little society or piece of work. Every worker should feel and know that the details of his work, the drudgery he undertakes, is one of the steps by which mankind slowly rises to heights but dimly seen. But we must show him the heights. We must trace for him the long, slow progress by which we have attained and the place which by steadfastness of purpose and faithfulness in small things we may ultimately fill. This broader view will usually be most conveniently obtained by lectures, and it is a suitable field for the extra-mural work of the Universities. Short courses of lectures should be given at frequent intervals on social work and economics, in all centres of population, under the direct encouragement and with the financial support of the local administrative body.

Degrees of Training.

In these three forms of instruction I have set out the minimum amount of instruction and training for the efficient voluntary worker who is to do his work intelligently ; but there are degrees of training. Most voluntary workers will take their

work and their training side by side, very much in the way I have just suggested, and during the War, when there is such a great demand for service of all kinds, it is as much as we can expect, and possibly as much as we ought to try for, but in normal times much more may be and has been attempted. There are some workers, however, who desire something more, and it is desirable that a body of workers should be as thoroughly equipped as it is possible to make them, and for these the Universities have provided courses of instruction and training which usually cover a period of twelve months or more. Many of those who have trained in this way have done so with the object of taking salaried posts, but a fair proportion have been voluntary workers who wished to equip themselves with great thoroughness for social work. Those who were thus trained must have found large scope for their abilities. It is probable that we shall see an increasing number of these fully-trained workers. Their place will usually be at the centre of an organisation, and they will be largely concerned with direction; they will also be very useful as instructors. I think also they will serve as officials and organisers in places where some form of social work is undertaken for the first time and funds are not forthcoming for a paid official; or in the organisation of a movement which is in the experimental stage, before it has obtained general approval or public recognition. It is important that a large place should remain open for voluntary and experimental effort, and it is here that the fully-trained voluntary worker, whether in social or other work, will find the most important opening for his ability—always provided he retains his original impulse and has

not become narrowed by preconceived ideas and stereotyped methods acquired in his course of training. I think there is just a chance of being over-trained in social work. We want in such work, as much as anywhere, a freshness of outlook and a breadth of sympathy: without these we shall not get far in social or in educational work. We must all of us have met the social worker of experience who has become hard and generally unsympathetic, full of rules and principles: we can almost hear the clanking of the machine as each case is "put through" and labelled. How dismal! If that is what we mean by social work, let us drop it and try something else, for we have missed our way. I think most training centres are aware of this danger and try to guard against it, but it is a snare for voluntary workers as well as for the more professional officials. With the great increase in the socialisation of life, and particularly in the number of legislative enactments affecting the structure of Society, it is natural that there should arise a class of trained workers who will become professional secretaries and organisers of such work. I believe in most cases there is a strong sense of duty and a fine impulse, and that the idea of salary is secondary, but there is no reason why they should not be paid, and well paid, for their work. At present it is a kind of halfway house between philanthropy and a profession, but it may as rightly be a profession as is the practice of medicine. I refer to this matter because it has become a serious question, and would have been more so but for the War, viz.: to what extent fully-trained workers who do not require a salary should voluntarily undertake work for which others require payment. I think care

will have to be exercised in this respect, but if the fully-trained voluntary worker who can devote his whole time to the work keeps in mind the special kind of work which I have mentioned, and particularly the experimental work, it seems to me he will be in his right place.

Committee and Real Work.

It seems necessary to make some distinction between being on a committee and doing some real work. Being on a committee may involve a great deal of hard thinking, which is the most difficult work of all; but, on the other hand, a great many people flatter themselves that by being on a committee they are working, when really they are doing very little. As a rule, committees consist of voluntary workers; but in many cases, whilst they are no doubt voluntary, it is somewhat of a misnomer to call them workers. Committees are necessary. I know of no other method of satisfactory control, and I do not believe in a "committee of one." A dictatorship may be efficient on occasion, but it ultimately leads into a blind alley and disaster, because the interest has not been sufficiently widely spread. This is peculiarly true of all movements depending upon voluntary effort. If interest is to be maintained, the committee should be regularly called together, and the agenda should deal with matters of vital interest and practical work. But I would go a step further than this and say that all committees dealing with social betterment should consist largely of those who are actually doing the work. There are some charitable committees which meet and arrive at decisions, and let the whole of the

real work—the actual contact with the poor—be done by paid officials. If anything goes wrong, the committee blames the officials; when things go well, the committee, mostly “deadheads,” takes the credit. Such committees know nothing of the joy of fellowship with those who suffer. Their acquaintance with disappointment is at second hand, and the achievement of success is not theirs, but another’s. They bid guests to a dinner and leave servants to preside. Ultimately their work is atrophied and goes wrong because they never come into close contact with reality, and know the poor only as “cases” in reports. It will not do. If we are going to reconstruct—if, indeed, we are to construct at all—it will not be by sitting in rooms with closed doors and never coming into close personal contact with the real conditions. Committees are necessary, and the voluntary worker will find his right place on such bodies, but do not let us think that our work begins and ends there. We must qualify for the position, and maintain it by taking an active part in working; and we must have first-hand knowledge of the environment in which our constructive efforts are to operate.

New Developments in Voluntary Service.

To deal with all the openings which now exist for the various types of voluntary workers would take us far beyond the scope of the writer’s aim, but it may be of service to view in outline the vast fields which lie open to us. The War has emphasised the need for many kinds of social work—what might, perhaps, better be described as “helpfulness”; but, if we think of it, does it

not appear that a great deal of the need was always there, and that what the War has done is to enormously increase the number of those who wish to be helpful? The willing worker has always found enough to do; he finds it still; he will always find it. We must be very thankful for this new spirit, and it is for those who are engaged in constructive work, whether educational or social, to see that this enthusiasm does not evaporate or become diverted into useless channels.

There is great need at the present time for co-ordination of social service. Some districts possess societies and organisations which cover, in one way or another, the needs of the locality, but without any co-ordination of effort. The result is not only overlapping, which can be largely prevented by mutual registration of the assistance given, but there is also duplication of organisation, and it may be a mere accident whether a case is dealt with by one society or by another. It may happen that two societies with slightly different methods have practically the same object, whilst a different need which calls urgently for attention is not met because no society in the district includes this particular piece of work in its purview. Whilst some districts may be well provided for, others are lamentably deficient in organisations for meeting the ever-present demands, or are served by very inefficient societies with archaic ideas. A re-organisation of social work is urgently required throughout the whole of England. We do not know what may be in front of us after the War, or even during the War, and it is more than time we got our house in order.

Survey of Social Work.

The first step in re-organisation should be a complete survey, nationally and locally, of all work which is being undertaken, and of all openings for every kind of personal service. This survey might be undertaken voluntarily or by the State. If voluntarily, the new Joint Committee on Social Service would be the most likely body to undertake such work provided it had sufficient funds placed at its disposal for the purpose. On the other hand, there is much to be said for the State undertaking such a survey. It seems inevitable that ultimately some Government department will have to be responsible, in greater or less degree, for the co-ordination of all forms of assistance, more particularly for supplying information and guidance. Whether some new department to be formed, such as the proposed Ministry of Health, would be the proper body, remains to be seen, but in the meantime there is the Local Government Board, and it is very much to be hoped that the Board, either by means of a departmental commission, or by encouraging and possibly assisting a voluntary organisation such as the one named above, will see that a survey is made. After such a survey, and after the information thus obtained has been tabulated and made available, some form of co-ordination would be seen to be inevitable. Steps would have to be taken to bring backward districts into line, and better methods and more system introduced into most other districts. It would, of course, be a gradual process, and it is important that the principle of voluntarism should be maintained. For this reason it is probable that a Government

department working in co-operation with a central representative body of voluntary workers would be likely to obtain the greatest measure of success. If the State moves in this matter, as I sincerely trust it will, it will have to deal in one way or another with the numerous voluntary bodies, therefore it would be advisable that voluntary workers with knowledge and wide experience should be associated with the inquiry and with the subsequent central department. The establishment of the Local Representative Committees has paved the way for the linking up of all voluntary effort and its relationship to a central body, but the scope should be very much enlarged. Each locality should have its own grouping arrangement, ranging from statutory committees and Poor Law authorities to the smallest group of persons whose aim is the public welfare, whatever may be the way by which they seek to attain it. Such co-ordination, wisely established and carried out, would add immensely to the value of voluntary effort and provide greater opportunities for personal service.

Field of Work.

Awaiting such an inquiry, and consequent co-ordination, as I have suggested, the voluntary worker must usually seek his own openings, but I would point out the undesirability of plunging into new schemes without considering the older and tried methods first. At the present time most voluntary workers want to do something which may be regarded as war work, but, rightly understood, it is all the same work. At the present time there is no better opening for the volunteer, wishing to do social work, than what is known as

"after-care." Most voluntary workers are not adapted for monotonous work. In "after-care" there is infinite variety : no two cases are alike, and, approached in the right spirit, every case may be of absorbing interest. Most "after-care" work is linked up with local administration, and is particularly adapted to those who cannot give a great deal of time and have not had much experience and training. Another very large field, and one of urgent need, is work amongst young people in the adolescent period : boys' and youths' clubs, girls' and mixed clubs, and women patrols. Still another sphere, in which there is rapid development and a great opening for voluntary effort, is child welfare, beginning with babies' welcomes, and following on to play centres, boy scouts and girl guides, and the care of crippled children. All this, and much more, is waiting for the willing worker, and is suitable for those who have no special training, or those who will get their training along with their work, and can give part only of their time.

Direction of Voluntary Workers.

This brings us to the question of the possibility of organising voluntary work in the sense of finding and allocating workers. The attempt has been made in various directions, and one or two societies have been formed with this object. One of them had a fair measure of success in arousing an interest in social work among the very limited section of the community to which it appealed. Some societies have wished to be a kind of "clearing house" for all charitable work and workers. I think the Charity Organisation Society in London and some

Guilds of Help in the country have done something in this direction, but it is very largely an unrealised ideal. I am not sure that it will ever be realised, except partially. The volunteer is more frequently caught by an appeal to do a particular piece of work than by a general appeal to do something. Here and there, no doubt, some people will have a vague desire to work without knowing what there is to be done, and it is very desirable that these people should have direction, and some consultative body would be useful to them. Perhaps, if we get a national department co-ordinating social work, we may find a place for this kind of function working through local bodies. Frankly, I am afraid of too much organisation of such a volatile thing as the impulse to voluntary effort in its early stages. If the volunteer gets the impression that he is going to be a cog in a machine, he will not offer himself; on the other hand, we are so variously constituted that some of us like explicit directions as to what we have to do.

A Social Ideal.

It is clearly evident that the construction, or re-construction, of national life which is now going on, makes increasing demands upon voluntary effort, and we are beginning to expect that these demands will be met. Are we arriving at the time when it will be an ideal for every member of the community to have two occupations, viz., (1) professional or paid work and (2) voluntary or unpaid? Shall we ask of a man what his profession or occupation is, and ask, as a matter of course, what is his voluntary work? Shall we be very much surprised if we hear that, besides his busi-

ness, he does nothing but play golf? We have very nearly arrived at that stage during the War. After the War there may be a reaction for a time, but not entirely, because even before the War such diverse bodies as the Universities and Public Schools on the one hand and societies of working men on the other were sending out men and women in increasing numbers who desired to work for the welfare of the community in addition to earning a living. I see the day coming when this ideal will be general and will be one of the ways of solving our many problems.

Influence of Education.

This brings me to the consideration of the place of education as it affects voluntary work. Whatever problem we attempt to solve, we are always confronted with the difficulty of the untrained mind. If we are trying to formulate a general policy affecting the whole community, we must beware of class ideals. If, for instance, we intend to rely to some extent, in local administration, upon voluntary effort, we must draw our workers from all classes of the community, or very nearly so, otherwise we shall not have the full confidence of all kinds of people; we shall be liable to misunderstand the problem, and we shall very likely fall short of workers. Therefore here again we see the need for more regard to education as a prime necessity of the State. For it is very difficult to get efficiency in any of the spheres I have named without the trained intelligence which education produces. But I would go further and say that with the progress of education, and especially as we get a better understanding of what

education is, we shall get a greater desire, more widely spread, to help in promoting the welfare of the community—a more intelligent participation in public affairs. This is a commonplace, but it has an important bearing upon the position which the voluntary worker will fill, and the extent to which he can be relied upon.

Objection to Voluntary Work Answered.

There are many aspects of voluntary work which I have not touched, and must leave to the enquiry and consideration of those who have become interested in the subject; but there is one objection to voluntary social work frequently raised which is too important to be altogether ignored. Many people say: But should not our object be to so organise our State that we have no need for all this voluntary effort directed to ameliorate the lot of our fellows? Should we not be better employed in so re-constituting Society that each member of the community had his appointed place and received a full recompense for his services, so that he could supply his own needs and meet his own difficulties? My reply is twofold:—First, we are not dealing with things as they should be, but as they are, and we have to deal with conditions as we find them; but, in the meantime, we cannot leave the poor to starve, the consumptive to die, the neglected uncared for, and the uneducated in ignorance. We must have our Guilds of Help, our After-care Committees, our War Pensions Committees, our Children's Care Committees, our Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, and many another society. Fight the battle, but do not leave the wounded

on the field to die. Besides, out of these helpers of the weak and the fallen we shall get our best reformers—those who know the weak places and the failures in our civilization. When a man becomes engaged in social work it is not long before he is calling out for some alteration in the body politic. He may still repeat his party shibboleths, but he gets things done to meet the social needs of the people he knows. It is politicians who are *not* engaged in social work—the theorizers and those who never come in contact with necessity, who block the way.

My second answer is, that the evidence, so far as we have gone, shows that the more social legislation we obtain; the more we progress and develop on the side of communal interests, as distinct from solely relying upon individualism; the more the voluntary worker seems to be required. An increase in what is termed social legislation has shown that we must have voluntary effort to complete and make effective the action of the State. I am not saying whether this increase in social legislation and communal effort is right or wrong, but I do say that the marked tendency of the last ten or twenty years, so far as we have gone in communal action, has been to increase the demand for voluntary effort, and has opened out all kinds of new spheres for that effort.

Lastly, are we to say that this desire to help, this offer of personal service, this feeling of kinship—at the bottom that is what it is, for we are members one of another, and we are finding it out more and more—are we to say that by some process of reform, some giant stride of development, this desire and this love are to be eliminated? God forbid! Shall we not rather say that along this path we shall enter into the Kingdom?

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